

Dear ASA Family,

In an effort to limit some of the hearsay surrounding the myriad of questions relating to equipment (specifically bats and balls), we would like to offer what's written below as an official update and hope that each of you find it useful as we start approaching the summer playing season.

Our committee, the ASA's Equipment Testing & Certification Committee, is recommending to the ASA Board of Directors that no sunset clause or other provision that could eliminate the use of all previously approved composite bats be adopted in 2009 or over the course of the next few years. A portion of our committee's decision making process was based on the 90+ percent satisfaction that was recorded on the last long range planning committee survey on your overall satisfaction with the current state of the game in terms of equipment performance. To reiterate our position, no immediate "expiration date" of current composite bats is presently planned to be recommended by our committee. Bat manufacturers will still be allowed to design composite bats for use in ASA sanctioned competitions.

This subject has been at the core of many rumors that have surfaced since the ASA required that all ASA certified bats be subjected to an accelerated break-in (ABI) process prior to initial certification. This new test requirement imposed by ASA should minimize the potential banning of bats produced by bat manufacturers because these bats will be tested at their peak performance upon initial certification rather than rely solely on random compliance testing. To be clear, bats currently in the marketplace will continue to be subject to random auditing by ASA to ensure the standards adopted by ASA are followed and that bats are not made differently than when they were initially certified. As all of you know, the ASA operates in a very democratic process so all of this is subject to the possibility of a rule change that could be proposed by one of our 260+ voting members during the ASA National Council Meeting held annually in November. The adoption of any rule requires 60% approval by the ASA voting council.

As manufacturers continue to make bats that exceed our standards, we expect the cottage industry of bat doctoring to continue. To that end, the ASA has recently filed a lawsuit against five individuals across the United States aimed at curbing this practice. As many of you know, we were successful in our last round of lawsuits resulting in a \$100,000 judgment and we expect similar results this time around.

In other equipment news, during the ASA's Equipment Testing and Certification Committee's most recent meeting (April 24-27), the committee took action involving the establishment of a standard regulating the dynamic stiffness of softballs at 7,500 lbs/inch when tested under the most current proposed ASTM test method. This standard will better control the use of multi "C.O.R." softballs and should bring more consistency to the softball marketplace without lowering the current static compression of 375 lbs/inch. Please note, static compression and dynamic stiffness are completely different measurements so these numbers should not be compared.

We don't expect the above change in ball specs to disrupt the marketplace whatsoever but it could lead to the development of a non approved ball list if manufactures continue to elect to

develop softballs that don't meet the specifications of this new ASA testing parameter. Also, we are not going to require the manufacturers to change the current ASA markings on softballs to avoid other confusion in the field.

Several manufacturers have developed alternative softballs using different C.O.R./static compression and dynamic stiffness measurements in an effort to provide alternative products used at various divisions and classifications of ASA play. As these products undergo further scrutiny in the lab and in ASA field testing, we will continue our efforts in finding the ideal ball bat combination to preserve the integrity of the game.

The committee also conducted a field test during its most recent gathering which, among other things, compared bats that have been altered using a common accelerated break-in technique called bat rolling. The first bat that was rolled was a popular bat currently in the marketplace and the second bat was a bat that will be produced and sold starting July 1. The batted ball speeds for the new bat that is going to be manufactured beginning July 1 was clearly lower than the current bats on the market further validating the ASA's new testing requirement that all bats must be fully broken-in prior to gaining initial certification.

The bat barrel compression testers that have been developed by Easton Sports in partnership with the Sporting Goods Manufacturer's Association (SGMA), should be available to all local associations that purchased them by mid-June according to the latest reports from Easton. These testers will be shipped to each location as soon as they arrive in Oklahoma City and will be accompanied with instructions for their use at the local league level. We encourage each local association to, at a minimum, follow the language contained in the ASA Code, Article 510 M 06 if a bat is found to be altered and used during the course of an ASA sanctioned game.

If you have any questions or comments about this letter or questions relating to our equipment committee, please feel free to direct them to me or the ASA National Office staff/committee representative, Kelly McKeown, kmckeown@softball.org.

On behalf of the entire ASA Equipment Testing & Certification Committee, we wish you the best of luck with the remainder of 2008 and look forward to seeing you in Oklahoma City this fall during the annual convention.

Regards,

Dick Gulmon
Chairman
Equip Standards Committee